

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIBREV 02361 281556Z
ACTION SIG-03

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /004 W
-----126492 290139Z /70
R 281230Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1602

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE 2361

FI CHANNEL

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASIG
SUBJECT: POST MEMORANDUM

REF: STATE 212834, INSPECTION INSTRUCTIONS TO POST

1. GABON

A. STATE OF RELATIONS - BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH GABON
ARE EXCELLENT. THERE ARE NO MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE PROBLEMS OR
ISSUES OUTSTANDING.

B. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

(1) AID ASSISTANCE - THERE IS NO AID PROGRAM AT
THIS POST, NOR DO I SEEK ONE. PRESENT CONGRESSIONAL CON-
STRAINTS, HOWEVER, PRECLUDE THIS POST FROM EVEN CONTEMPLATING
A PROGRAM IN FUTURE, EXCEPT POSSIBLY FOR MODEST SELF-HELP
PROGRAM, SINCE REASONS FOR THE CONSTRAINTS (GOG MEMBERSHIP
IN OPEC AND PER CAPITA GNP) ARE NOT LIKELY TO CHANGE.
WHILE I DO NOT ADVOCATE A PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE IN USUAL
SENSE OF THE TERM, I CONSIDER IT REGRETTABLE THAT
WE HAVE ARBITRARILY DENIED OURSELVES THE OPTION OF PRO-
VIDING ANY ASSISTANCE AT ALL (UNLESS GABON PAYS FOR IT),
EVEN IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN IT MIGHT BE IN OUR OWN
INTEREST TO DO SO (SEE LIBREVILLE 1883).

(2) POST ADMINISTRATION - FOR VARIETY OF
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REASONS, EVERY-DAY ADMINISTRATION AT THIS POST IS THE
MOST DIFFICULT I HAVE ENCOUNTERED AT ANY OF MY SIX
AFRICAN POSTS. HEART OF PROBLEM IS ENDEMIC TO LIBREVILLE.
THERE IS NO UNEMPLOYMENT. QUALIFIED GABONESE CAN FIND
BETTER (AND EASIER) JOBS ELSEWHERE IN LIBREVILLE.
EXPATRIATE TURNOVER IS HIGH. SALARIES AND BENEFITS ARE
EXCESSIVE, AND THE EMBASSY OFTEN FINDS ITSELF UNABLE TO

COMPETE WITH OTHER EMPLOYERS FOR QUALIFIED EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL. WITH LITTLE ANTICIPATION OF PERMANENCE AND JOBS AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE, INCENTIVES TOWARD IMPROVEMENT FOR THOSE WE DO EMPLOY ARE LIMITED, IF INDEED THEY EXIST AT ALL. ONE POSITION (CONSULAR ASSISTANT) WILL BE FILLED IN OCTOBER FOR FIFTH TIME IN 26 MONTHS. RESULT IS THAT AMERICAN SUPERVISORS, PARTICULARLY OUR ONE OFFICER IN ADMINISTRATION, MUST SPEND INORDINATE AMOUNTS OF TIME TRAINING FSLs AND, INDEED, DOING SOME OF WORK FSLs WOULD NORMALLY BE EXPECTED TO DO. THIS, COUPLED WITH BUREAUCRATIC LETHARGY, HIGH PRICES, LACK OF SUPPLIES AND POOR SERVICE THROUGHOUT CITY, OFTEN MAKES EVEN SIMPLEST ADMIN TASK A MAJOR OPERATION.

RELATED TO SITUATION (OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF IT) IS THAT SOME ASPECTS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTION AT THIS POST IN MYREESTIMATION HAVE, UNTIL ARRIVAL OF PRESENT ADMIN OFFICER, BEEN ALLOWED TO DETERIORATE, E.G., THERE HAVE BEEN NO INVENTORIES AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT RECORD KEEPING OF HOUSEHOLDS, OFFICERS, EXPENDABLES, OR NON-EXPENDABLES FOR UP TO THREE YEARS OR MORE. WITH HELP OF AF/EX, WE ARE CORRECTING THIS PARTICULAR PROBLEM, BUT BURDEN ON OUR ADMIN OFFICER IS EXCEPTIONALLY (AND, IN MY JUDGEMENT, NEEDLESSLY) HEAVY. WE PROBABLY CANNOT OVERCOME LOCAL CONDITIONS, ALTHOUGH WE WILL BE MOST INTERESTED IN ANY SUGGESTION INSPECTORS MAY HAVE, BUT WE CAN HELP OURSELVES. I, AND MY PREDECESSORS BEFORE ME, HAVE ASKED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOR AN ADDITIONAL AMERICAN, A GSO (SEE LIBREVILLE 1596), TO EASE STRAIN ON ADMIN OFFICER AND PROVIDE MUCH-NEEDED ADDITIONAL SUPERVISION. I HAVE NOT EVEN HAD A REPLY.

C. EVALUATION OF ACCOMPLISHMENT OF POLICIES - GOOD.

2. SAO TOME ET PRINCIPE

A. STATE OF RELATIONS - AS MEMBER OF AFRICAN "PROGRESSIVE" GROUP, GSTP OFTEN DOES NOT SHARE OUR FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS. BILATERAL RELATIONS, HOWEVER, ARE GOOD. B. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS - NONE.

C. EVALUATION OF ACCOMPLISHMENT OF POLICIES - GOOD.
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